Wilmington

A RETROSPECTIVE

Gerry O'Reilly

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Gerry O'Reilly, editor

GERRY O'REILLY
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Composition: Patricia O'Reilly

Wilmington Center

When one passes through Wilmington Center today, the commercial activity is hardly noticed. Yet, it was just a few years ago that the Center, crossroad of Routes 38, 129, and 62, reeked with the smell of activity. Wilmington was a railroad junction town: 60-plus trains, including long, long freights, passed through each day with most of them stopping to board or unload passengers. The chug, soot, and steam were real. Some trains were Wilmington-to-Boston only–the engine turning in the roundhouse that was on the Wildcat tracks just north of Middlesex Avenue. The names of the businesses that were in the Center are only talked about today, but they, too, were real: Huntley's and Phyll's served Pick ale; Griffin's, McLaughlin Drug, and the Atlantic Market sold packaged liquor. We had the Economy and First National, Bennie's Radio, Byam's Laundry, Ames News, Poole's Bakery, taxi stands, a movie house, a police station, a tailor, cobblers' shops, the bowling alley, Mike Weinberg's Dry Goods Store, a bank, the post office, the coal yard, oil yard, grain yard, lumber yard, concrete block yard, etc. The Center's activity waned when the plaza opened and Avco came to town–Wilmington burst its seams, and only the pictures remain of the recent past.

Wilmington Center

Looking north, Wilmington Center about 1900. The corner of Middlesex Avenue in the background. The streetcar tracks are clear in the unpaved road; the overhead wires are also visible. Only two buildings remain today, the one with the flat roof facing the street and the present Bedell Insurance office.

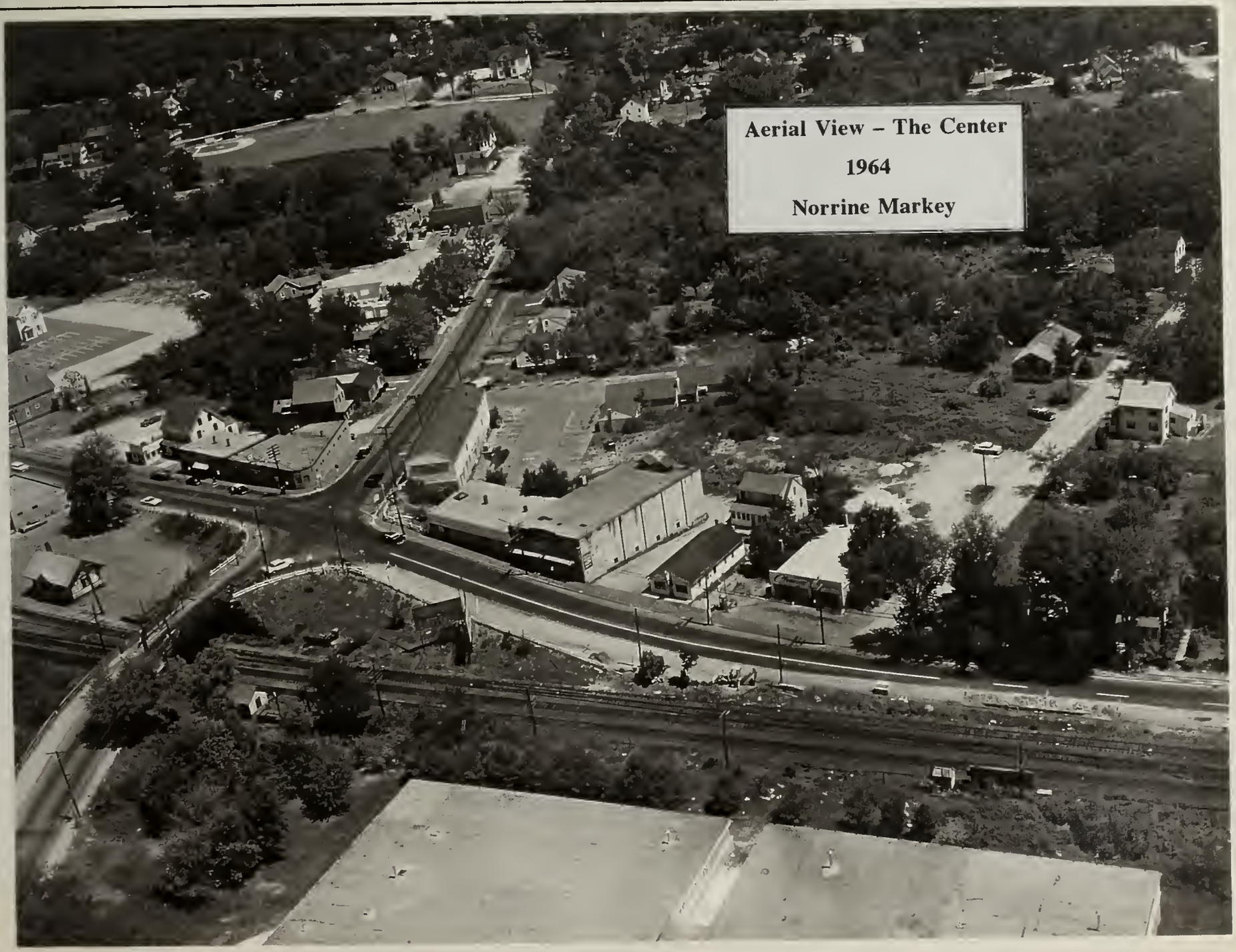
Bill Dayton 1900

The Wilmington Theater was closed, and a "For Sale" sign was posted. Weinberg's moved to the corner of Middlesex Avenue and Main Street into a modern, new, clothing store. Merrimac Cleaners was now in Buck's Garage; Roy's shoe store was in Phyll's Cafe.

Roy Ferguson **1955**

Theatre Marquee

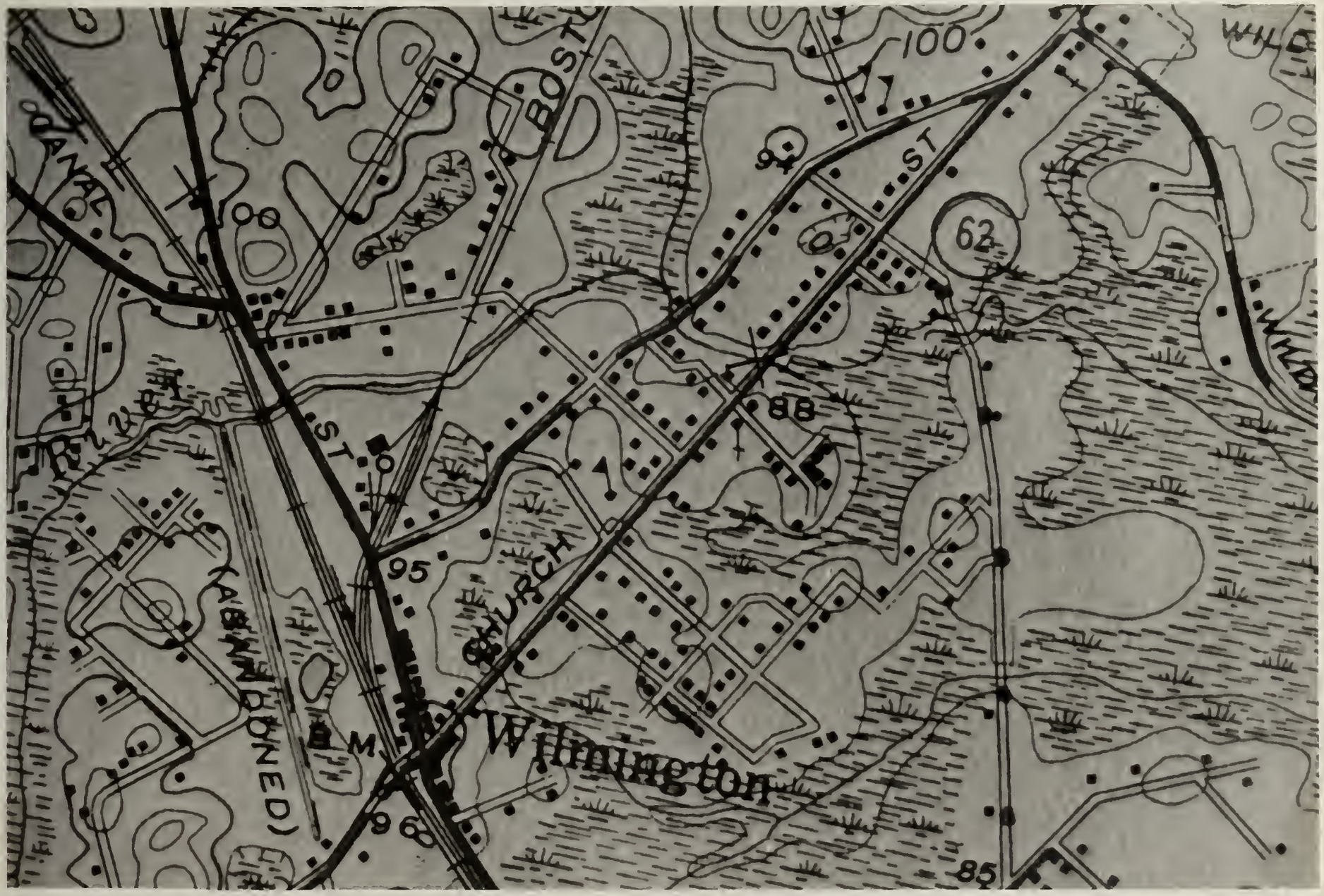
Ann Humphrey Berghaus **1981**



Aerial View – The Center

1964

Norrine Markey



National Geodesic Survey Map of 1935 of Center area

Bill Dayton

Train Station 1940

Paul White

Big Joe's Sub Shop

Aerial View – The Center
1964
Norrine Markey

Big Joe's Sub Shop

Train Station

The Depot was purchased in 1962 from the B&M to use as a private parking lot. Wilmington Ford purchased the property a few years later for a used car lot. Joe LaCreta then bought the run-down property and refurbished the building and the parking lot for his present sandwich shop.

Roy Ferguson

1955

Railroad Bridge at Burlington Avenue

Ann Humphrey Berghaus **1981**

P6625 Burlington Avenue, Wilmington, Mass.

Wilmington Center - 1940

Paul White

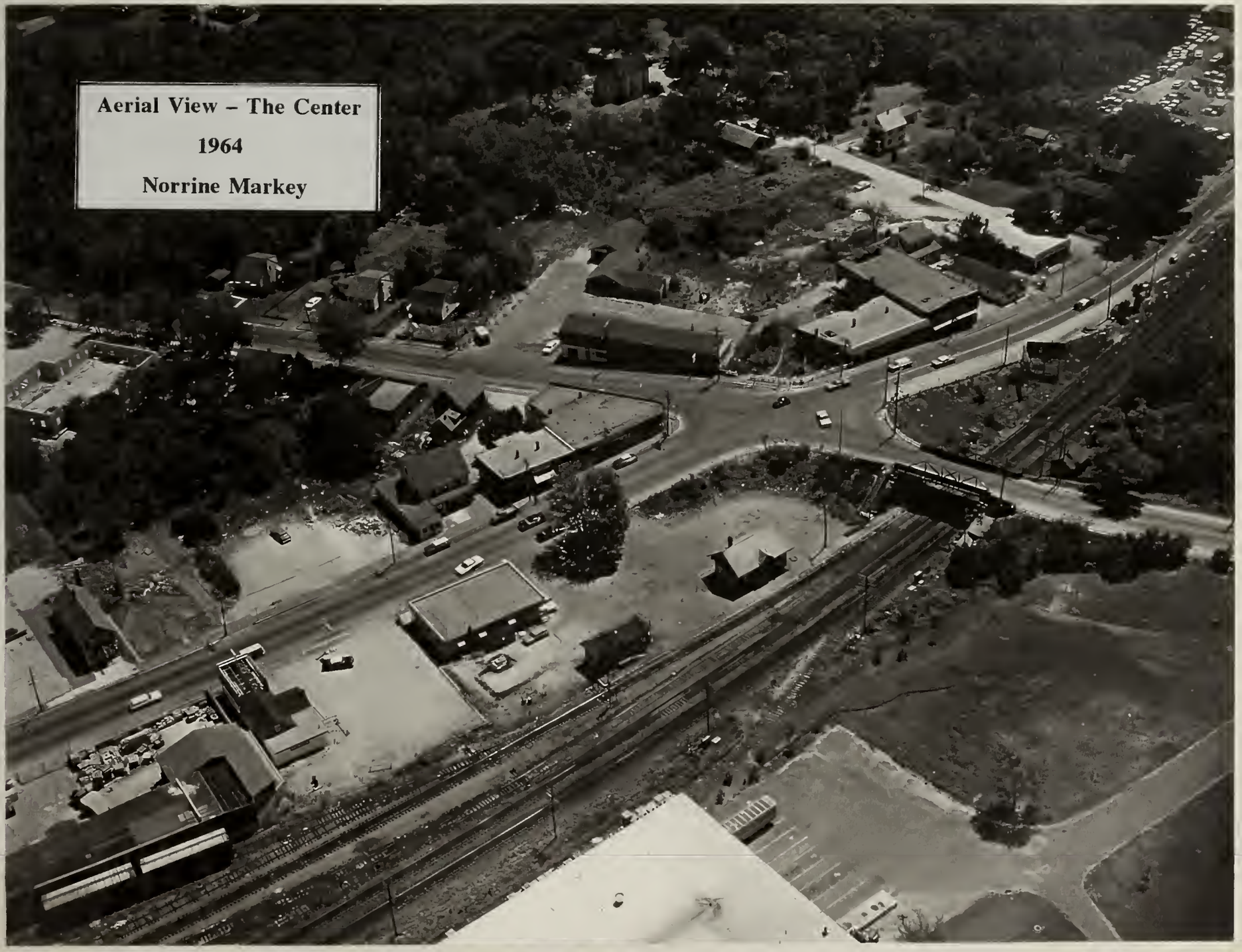
Block Destroyed by Fire, 1947
Notice the lined crosswalk.

Wilmington Center - 1940

Paul White

Church Street Hardware: Schelumiel MacIntosh and Frank Griffin, Sr. opened the store in 1941. The package store was added shortly afterwards.

Frank Griffin / Bill Doyle **1945**



Aerial View – The Center

1964

Norrine Markey

Depot Memories

The Wilmington Depot has been located adjacent to the much publicized Burlington Avenue railroad bridge for as long as I can remember. It now belongs to "Big Joe" LaCreta. The B&M baggage handling and freight building was located north of the railroad station. It stood near the end of the present building with the "Bagels to Boston" sign.

Adjacent to and north of the railroad depot was the Buck Brothers' grocery store. During the Depression, it was Weinberg's department store. During World War II, it was occupied by George Spanos' Restaurant.Over Buck Brothers' Store was a rental apartment. My great-grandmother Abbie (Hilliard) Lyon(s) lived there for as long as I can remember. Access to this apartment was through a door at the rear of the store. A long, dark, and dingy hallway led up narrow, steep, winding stairs to the second floor. Abbie Lyon(s) died here in April of 1932. If I remember correctly, they had to take out a window to remove the body. By today's building codes in Wilmington, this building would have flunked every code. The picture shown in this book was taken about 1940 to show the burned roof at the top floor.

Once, while home on a furlough from the United States Army Air Corps, I walked into the restaurant and presented George with my picture in uniform and received my free meal. That picture still exists, along with those of others who served in World War II, in the panels that once were on George's wall.

At the north end of the modern, brick building stood two wooden two-story residential buildings. After burning down, this became the site of old Joe Ireland's gas station. At the extreme right of the picture, where Action Glass is now, was the location of Atlantic meat store. It became Altman's Liquor Store, after the town voted to let package stores be in Wilmington when the restaurants that served liquor were voted out.

Bill Dayton

Fire-gutted Building

George Spanos' restaurant in the 1940s.

Herb Pickering's plumbing supply shop is shown in its earlier location prior to expansion along the side of the building out to Main Street. Note the burned-out roof section and the painted sign.

Bill Dayton 1940

George's Restaurant -

George Spanos was the unofficial mayor of Wilmington. During World War II, he opened his doors to all servicemen. His wall pictures that survive today serve as a tribute to the man, a Wilmington legend.

Roy Ferguson

1955

George Spanos, the unofficial mayor of Wilmington, friend to all military servicemen and young Wilmington athletes.

John Ritchie **1965**

Altman's Liquor Store

Roy Ferguson **1955**

In 1922 the Eagle Cafe, owned by Bert Forbes, was in the depot parking lot. The fence is along Main Street. The tracks are visible in the right background. The Burlington Avenue Bridge is in the left rear background –notice the stairs leading up to the road. Harry Huntley purchased the lunch cart and moved it across Main Street to form the basis for his restaurant, Huntley's Lunch.

Liz Huntley White

Harry Huntley –in white work clothes– in the 40s.

Huntley's Lunch

Harry Huntley purchased the Eagle Cafe in 1925 and moved it across the street. He built his restaurant around this cafe and ran that business, until he retired in 1961.

He employed many local people at different times in his diner, restaurant, and catering business. Some of these were: Walter Babine, Hermie Babine, Wes Baker, Bob Baker, Lefty Gratcyk, Art Lynch, Tina Hembree, Robbie Ethier, Horace Huntley, and Frank Huntley.

Liz Huntley White

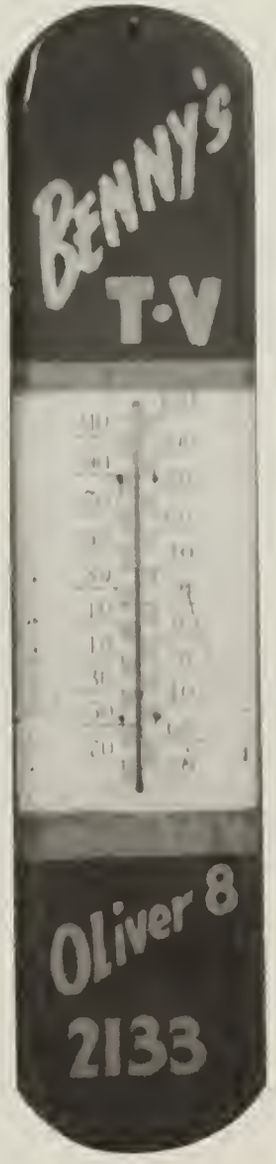
Willie Lynch, Dr. Ralph Lepore, Roy Ferguson

Bill Coulter entering.

Roy Ferguson

1957

Huntley's Restaurant



Roy Ferguson

1955

Wilmington Center - 1940

Paul White

Wilmington Center

Jim Durkee **1953**

Post Office - 1940

Paul White

Bedell Bros. Insurance

When urban renewal was defeated at the Town Meeting, Mike Weinberg took the initiative and built a modern store at the corner of Middlesex Ave. and Main Street. The lot now is the site of Massbank for Savings.

Ann Humphrey Berghaus

1950

Roundhouse and Water Tower

The last steamer was taken out in October of 1954. The building had six engine stalls as well as the turning around table.

LC Hutchinson, Jr. / Bill Dayton **1954**

A Walk on Main Street

The Editor would like to step back into the recent past on a day's journey. A Saturday trip with 25¢ in the pocket on movie day. The Wilmington Theatre cost 12¢, bus fare was 5¢ each way; three cents left over for candy. On a good Saturday –probably springtime when the day was long– I'd walk to the center to save a nickel. The show was run by Fred Husson, his wife and her two sisters. (Show slips were paper airplanes flown when the lights went down.) When the movie was over, the doors burst open, and everyone would try to leave at once. I would walk home to save the other nickel. On the way home I'd meet Tito Babine first of all, then downstairs to the bowling alley –four lanes, 20¢ a string– John MacCarron in charge. Pool –four tables– was 1¢ a minute –first table reserved. George Castanaris was the town tailor. Paul Carpenter cleaned up in Mike Weinberg's dry goods store. Gun-Sight Pass was the empty corner at Main and Church: Charlie, Red, and Tim were regulars. Across from Griffin's package store was MacLaughlin Drug –Steve Condrey, happy, smiling, and friendly. Adrian cut hair with a shaky hand. Roy Poole's bakery smelled great. John Finnerty ran the First National, Tony Zeolie ran the paper store, Dick Woods was his counterman. In the train yard, steam sucked and blew the soot into the wind and upon all that walked by.

The police station moved to Church Street, and Benny Harrison's Radio and TV moved in; Rocky Cipollo ran his errands. Huntleys was the busiest of all –Art Lynch was the A-No.1 tap man. Harry ran the restaurant –Horace helped out. Friendly, well-known George Spanos across the street. Blanchard ran the Economy; Jack Riley was there to make the meat go. I'd go on past Jeanette White's cobble shop (later Bob Michelson's shoe store). Then, to the post office. Inside the P.O. were two writing tables, two pens, two ink wells; I'd write

my name on the table, probably erase someone else's, and move on. Across the street –Wilmington Grain– did you ever buy five pounds of rabbit food from Bessie with Meyer looking on? Joe McMahon ran the bank. Bill Cavanaugh had a cab –John "Okie" O'Connell was one of his drivers, and, in later years, Jim Cuoco did the driving. At the RR crossing Ruben Porter and Henry Hiller smiled and said, "Hi!" I always wanted to crank the crossing gate down. From the shack I'd go back to and in the roundhouse. The men inside were friendly but all business when a train was being turned around. From the roundhouse I would cut through behind Builder's Supply (Harry Symmes) then behind Louie's; the tires were there then also. If luck was on, Forrest Dame's midget racer was there to be seen. Now, out to Main Street–drop a stone in the stream at Louie's and go into Bully's Sunoco. Spin the propeller on one of the many red, white and blue windmills. Continue on behind Susan Estler's, then back on Main Street. Run up the hill and down the other side. Cross over Main and run all the way to the Blue Terrace –only swamp and trees where Demoulas and Ford are now.

I'd slow down at the Terrace–take a look in the bar side and then continue on to Rocco's –Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Little waitressed. Cross over to the Rainbow with its fake stone front, look in–always a full house, a walk-in neighborhood place. Cross back over Main Street and run up the hill and down the other side to Carta's diner. Thompson's Grove was across the street from George Cross's gas station. I'd run the bases, hook slide into second (the base paths were deep ruts). Climb over the wire fence and back over to the other side of Main Street –climb up and walk the elegant stone wall over Lubber's Brook –we called it "Pop's Brook". Then, over to Al "Jake" Riley's gas station. Jake was the supreme authority at Silver Lake and

everyone owed him five bucks. To Tat's for a vanilla ice cream. Bill and Lil in the early days, then taken over by Margaret and Hap Hourihan. Licking the ice cream, I'd check out Tom McQuaid's store (Tom Twaid). Tom talked a blue streak –a cigarette butt hung on his lip, sometimes lit, but mostly out, and never fell off his lip. Tim Cunningham had an ice cream parlor in the old Economy store. Louie Hailson followed Tim with a drug store. Art the Barber cut my hair first (Arthur Costa from Lowell). Mr. Cutter ran his drug store. With ice cream pretty well gone, I cut through the minature golf course (grown over in my time) and then head out behind the ice house; skip some stones, hoping for a thirty. Then over to the scale house and rock the scale a bit. Then along the lake where that beautiful postcard rail fence stood. Look for some frogs and turtles (I caught them all). Look once at George Steven's market; Mr. Allard cut the meat, later Bob Wagstaff. Then run home. Our house was the last one in Wilmington –backdoor in Wilmington, front door in Tewksbury.

I'd burst in the house, out of breath. My mother, Nellie, in her sweet Irish voice would say , "Oh, my boy, where have you been?"

–"Skipping rocks."

_"And did you see anybody?"

–"Nah, nobody."

Gerry O'Reilly

Flooded cranberry bog, now Rotary Park, behind Cranberry House, towards Adelaid St. and Highway Dept.

Looking towards Main Street, Middlesex Ave. at Rotary Park

Mrs. Hiller's Cranberry House; the outside porch housed the equipment for the operation of the cranberry business. It is said that she sat on a lawn chair under an umbrella and surveyed the bog and the workers. In 1946 the porch was being torn down and the inner apartment was being remodeled. Notice the sidewalk is higher than the roadway.

Ann Butters

Highway Department

Wilmington Police Station is now occupying the site.

Roy Ferguson **1955**

Dep. Chief Francis "Nifty" Hoban and John Imbimbo assisting with ambulance duty on Church Street at the police station.The MacIntosh Building is to the rear, and Charlie Gilbert's house is in the left background.

Norinne Markey **1953**

Walker School and Rotary Park

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

Walker School

Roy Ferguson

Walker School

In the yellow building proudly proclaiming: "Walker School 1896" I spent four happy years. I remember Mrs. Wiberg, Miss Kevil, Mrs. Oman, and Mrs. Donovan. My friends were Eileen LePore, Elaine Bertwell, Judy Cutter, and Janice Buck. We put our coats in the "Cloak Closet". At recess, the girls played out back on the black swing poles (no swings, just poles) and on the four huge boulders (one shaped like a horse) bordering the Church Street sidewalk. The boys played in the front of the school on the black seesaw poles (no wooden board, just poles). I remember patriotic assemblies on the front steps, PTA mothers serving soup in the basement, and, with a note from your parents, being allowed to ice skate on the bog across the street at lunchtime. ...Most of all, I remember feeling very sad that day in 1985 when the Walker School was torn down.

Ann Humphrey Berghaus

1955

Walker School 1936

Front Row: Julia Webber, Bob Swain, Doris Richard, Albert Manson, Liz Huntley, Francis O'Hara, Dottie Froton, John _____, Irene Foley, Bob Gardner_____Canales

Sitting: Rose Cipollo, Gerry Larkin, Grace Dame, _____, Muriel Martin, Jimmy Welling, Gerry Porter, Mary Smith

Back Row: Bob Woods, Bob Findlay, Robert Blaisdell, Kenny Hallett, Jack Reagan, Ray Carter, Fred Bischoff, Alan Dickinson, Burt Holmes, Dottie Oman, Phyllis McSheffrey, Roberta Hillis

Teacher - Miss Cannon

Liz Huntley White

Methodist Church on Church Street

Rev. Putnam Webber was the Pastor when the Wilmington Methodist Church, with a capacity of 96 parishioners, was dedicated in 1884. The building was used as the church school when the new church was built in 1957. The original church was torn down in the summer of 1976 while Rev. Richard Evans was the Pastor.

Ann Humphrey Berghaus

Jim Durkee **1953**

Methodist Church

The cornerstone for this church was laid in 1957 by Rev. Richard Harding. Other early Pastors were Rev. Thomason, Rev. Miller. The first Assistant Pastor was Fred Hess.

AHB

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

St. Thomas - 1940

Paul White

Wilmington Memorial Library now stands on this site.

Saint Thomas Church

Roy Ferguson **1955**

Wilmington Historical Commission
Babcock Collection

Saint Thomas –note the new building fund sign

1963

Saint Thomas Church

Fr. Edmund Croke, along with Fr. Francis Mackin and Fr. Paul Berube, broke ground for this church, which was dedicated in 1960 by Cardinal Cushing.

AHB

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

The Thomas D. Bond Estate was purchased by St. Thomas as a residence for priests in 1920.

Paul White 1940

Jim Durkee

Saint Thomas Rectory

1953

American Legion Hall

American Legion Past Commanders

Robert Annaian
John Kelley
Joe Steen
Dave Trane
Paul Haught
Ann MacInnis
Leslie Gauthier
Ken Maynard
Ray Moriarty
Larry Noel
Joe Bradley
Eugene Sullivan
Angus MacFeeley
Bob Brown
Jim Breen
Joe Vieira
Clayton Tracy
John Winters
Nick DeFelice
Paul Pintrich
Elmer Parker
Royce Robinson
Walter Collins
Tom MacFeeley
James Murray
Ralph Zwicker
James Fairweather
Joseph Woods
Carl Dreger
Bernard P. McMahon
Clement L. Thompson
Vinal H. Conway
Earl R. Bayliss

Roy Ferguson

1955

The Town Hall as pictured about 1900. Notice the steeple. The building, formerly a Baptist church, was used by the school department in the late 1920s as an elementary, two-session school.

Bill Dayton **1900**

Town Hall

Adele Passmore

1959

Wilmington Art Council Building

Arts Center

In 1987, the Arts Center moved into the old Town Hall. The Emergency Management Group is also housed there. The building has been renovated and is now a working cultural center. The Arts Council provides a variety of activities, including art exhibitions, art demonstrations, lectures, workshops, classes, concerts, etc. Social and cultural activities are held in the Art Center on a continuing basis.

LHW

Roy Ferguson

1955

Jim Durkee

Congregational Church

This church, built in 1865, replaced the second Congregational Church built in 1813 and destroyed by the Bond Bakery Fire in 1864. In 1953, a parish house addition was made to the rear of the church.

AHB

1953

Grange Hall

The Grange Hall was a social gathering place for many of the events in the town in the 30s and 40s: Basketball games, banquets, movie house, dances, school plays, and every other imaginable event possible.

Roy Ferguson

Now a parking lot on Wildwood Street for the library

1955

The Roman House now serves as the school administration building and superintendent's office.
The Roman Barn was moved to the football field and was vandalized and burned down in 1986.

Roy Ferguson

1955

Wilmington High School

Gerry O'Reilly

1980

Jim Durkee

New Wilmington High School opened in 1950

1953

The first class to graduate from the "New" high school.

Gerry O'Reilly **1951**

The Center School was built in 1888 to serve the needs of the school department from that time until it was destroyed: it is now a parking lot. The adjacent library building also served the school needs for the Town. This building now houses the Fourth of July Headquarters and also serves as a community service building.

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

Center School

1934

1924

Jim Durkee

Old Wilmington High School – now the Swain School

1953

Preparing for Graduation - 1946

George Dyas

Jim Durkee

Daniel T. Buzzell School

1953

South Schoolhouse (1894)
A pride of Chestnut is this little, red schoolhouse. It remained a school until approximately 1938. In 1948 the Wilmington Skating Club used the building for their meeting house. Many remember the "Flying Backmans" and Jeannie Ashworth, a speed skating Bronze Medalist at the 1960 Olympics. The South Schoolhouse is now home to the Marine Corps league.

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

Baldwin (Butters') Apple Monument on Chestnut Street

One of Wilmington's contributions to the world was the Baldwin Apple. Although discovered originally by James Butters, Loammi Baldwin cut scions from Butters' tree and gave the apple its name. Oddly, when this monument was originally placed in Wilmington in 1895, it read: This pillar erected in 1895 by the Rumford Historical Association incorporated April 28, 1877 marks the estate where in 1796 Sam'l Thompson Esq. while locating the line of the Middlesex Canal discovered the first pecker apple tree later named the Baldwin.

AHB

Ann Humphrey Berghaus

1981

Fred Cain's Chrysler-Plymouth Dealership on Lowell Street
Williams' Sign now occupies the building
Fred Cain Chrysler-Plymouth moved to its present location in 1948.

Jim Cain **1937**

In 1936, Larry Gildart and Fred Cain were partners. Mr. Gildart and Mr. Cain parted amicably; they saw the need for more cars as the Depression ended. Mr. Gildart located to Main Street in a new building (which housed a tire company until recently). Fred Cain took over the Lowell Street building for a new Chrysler dealership. He moved to the present site on Main Street in 1948. Fred Cain is pictured in the open 1936 Chevy door.

Jim Cain **1936**

Aerial View – No. Wilmington
1964
Norrine Markey

A Memory Map

Why did I take these pictures that are included in this book? The primary reason was that a map of the town of Wilmington was prepared for the planning board. On the map was a list of 30 locations, including 27 buildings. I wanted to have this map in my "office" at home, but with the addition of pictures of 26 locations. I had contact prints made from 35mm film and pasted them on my map.

Taking the pictures brought back memories of earlier days in the neighborhood, going to and from school and making use of public buildings, as well as community businesses. My memories bring back those places that I journeyed to while growing up.

I lived within a half mile of the Harnden Tavern all my life. Pictures of this landmark brought back vivid memories of my father milking the cow, pulling carrots from the root cellar, stoking the furnace, etc.

At Brown's Crossing pumping station, the entire meadow area was mowed and flooded to provide great skating. If we had a really deep freeze, we could skate all the way to Martin's Pond in No. Reading. In the summer, we'd walk the Salem and Lowell tracks to fish off the bridge.

I remember yarding and hauling logs with two Belgian work horses at Bill Feindel's farm in years after the 1938 hurricane.

In the area of "Devil's Den" we explored woods and fields, picked blueberries, and climbed the cliffs.

Harriman's Tannery smelled bad, but it provided employment to many Wilmington residents.

Remembering the old high school, I recall when the numbers of the faculty and student body were depleted by World War II.

At the Whitfield School, I believe there still was an outhouse in 1932.

Jim Durkee

Whitfield School

Town DPW maintenance building

Roy Ferguson

1955

Jim Durkee — Whitfield School — 1953

Jim Durkee

Harriman's Tannery, Middlesex Ave., No.Wilmington

1953

Buck Brothers, North Wilmington

The building in the foreground is now Elia's Country Store. The building in the background was the No.Wilmington Post Office.

Roy Ferguson

1955

Roy Ferguson

Train Station, North Wilmington

Later housed Capt. Larz Neilson's *Town Crier* until destroyed by fire in the late 1980s. **1955**

Col. Joshua Harnden Tavern - 1980

This home was built in the 1770s. During the period between 1793 and 1807, this home was an inn or "tavern" for travelers who would pass through town. It was saved from destruction when taken by eminent domain in 1973 for historic preservation by the Town of Wilmington. The Col. Joshua Harnden Tavern, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, serves as a local history museum for our town.

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

The Harnden Tavern - note the island in the road

Jim Durkee

1953

Jim Durkee

Feindel Farm, now Upton Court

1953

Jim Durkee

Herb Foskett House

1953

North School, Salem Street

Site of the North Intermediate School

Roy Ferguson

1955

Town Bakery, Salem Street

Roy Ferguson **1955**

Jim Durkee

Temple Shalom, Salem Road

1953

Devil's Den

Legend tells of Captain Kidd burying his pirate gold in Devil's Den. This glacier cave was at the site of a granite hill off Andover Street, now the area of the Treasure Hill Development.

Jim Durkee **1953**

Jim Durkee — Foster's Pond from Wilmington Side — 1953

"Jinks" Ipswich River Crossing at Woburn Street

Jim Durkee

1953

Mr. Downs on his tractor

Wilmington Historical Commission
Babcock Collection

1963

Wilmington Historical Commission
Babcock Collection

Carter House, 500 Woburn Street

1963

Jim Durkee

Swain House, corner of Woburn Street and Lowell Street

1953

Aerial view, looking east, of Silver Lake. The new "Jack's Lunch" that became the DAV headquarters is shown center foreground.

Bill Dayton **1964**

Silver Lake –looking from Moxie Beach towards Main Street
Steven's Market, Silver Lake Betterment Building, Ten Hills Ice House.

Joyce Dalton **1940**

Aerial view, looking west, of Silver Lake.
Norinne Markey

1964

Ten Hills Ice House –Burned to the ground

Joyce Dalton

1945

Ten Hills Ice House –Burned to the ground

Joyce Dalton

1945

Silver Lake Summers

Summer began about two weeks before school was "let out." My mother would buy me a brand new pair of sneakers: black high-tops with a safety circle on the ankle and white soles. The sneakers were two sizes too big, but I could run faster with them on. School is out –"no more pencils, no more books, no more teachers' dirty looks." When I arrived home, and my mother would say, "Take off the sneakers. You'll need them to go back to school." Barefoot the rest of the summer. Two days later, the city kids arrived; the population around Silver Lake tripled: 20 new kids on my street. Shutters came off. The outhouses were lined with lime, and the screen doors began to bang. They came by bus, train, and cars, right up Route 38 from Charlestown, East Boston, Everett, Medford, Cambridge, Arlington, and Somerville. They all flocked to their camps around Silver Lake and the cool water waiting at Skylark, Bloodsucker, Danger, Moxie, and Baby beaches. (See Lou Connelly's description on how he got to the lake.)

This great increase in population was only a pulse of what was to come. The Skylark boathouse became a day camp for other city kids –they used waterwings and painted white wood floats –new groups each week. There were also baptisms at the Salvation Army Camp on Lake Street. The Evangelist camp in Milligan's Grove at the Tewksbury line was the two-week home for more kids up from Everett. They marched in line to Baby Beach each day, swam, then went back to camp for religion. The great hall proclaimed: "Behold Christ Cometh" in three-foot lighted letters, high on the front of the building. It was pure revival and swinging times when the lights were out.

Thompson's Grove held Charlestown Nite, Cambridge Nite, and other city Nites. More people came on the weekends to outings at the Grove, adding to the Lake's population. The pavilion rocked –dancing, parties, wrestling, boxing– it was all there. The new building (still standing) housed rows of slot machines on each wall – all being used, and lines formed to wait for an open slot. Then, the carnival would come to the Grove– more people, more excitement.

The Dance Hall on the lake was in its final days around my time, but I remember it lighted and in full use –I remember pounding the piano on the lime-green bandstand. Nights never slowed the population down. The "Troubadours" as the young men were called that lived in a camp on Maplewood sang and partied all night –as others did elsewhere and everywhere around the lake.

Early each morning I would go down to the lake; it was usually crystal clear and smooth as glass. I circled the lake looking for returnable bottles left from the night before: beer, milk, and tonic. Then, an hour later, the newcomers shattered the pane –they filled the lake. Mothers, daughters, sons, and some fathers on vacation. If I saw some kid I did not know, I would ask him if he wanted to buy a turtle. His eyes would glisten:
"Wow! Sure –how much?"
"Ten cents."
I would then go and get an eight-inch sun turtle, and the deal was set –another city kid taken.

During the war years, Jake Riley offered 75¢ for old car tires –I pulled every tire that was in the lake out, including one that hung on the pole at Skylark –I made a bundle.
The people that filled the beaches came for the day, wallowed in the sun, swam some, gabbed a lot, but

mainly enjoyed the lake for what it was. Teenagers hung in groups, talking, playing bid whist, kitty whist, or hearts.

Tats, Smith Bakery, and even Stewarts store were filled with kids in sloppy, wet bathing suits –barefoot and looking for ice cream, tonic, or O-Boy gum. The people came to and from the lake all day long, ending at twilight as a big bathtub –every street and path were open to foot traffic.

Everyone watched everyone else for water safety, and only one rule was strictly enforced –if it thundered, leave the lake and hustle home. One storm I really remember was when it hailed. The stones were marble-sized and landed in the lake like bullets. The Mackey sisters dragged me home as fast as they could travel. We ended up in Mile's screened porch; then the bullets stopped and the sun came out. I'll never forget it.
Labor Day –the city people all disappeared, and for two days the lake was completely silent. The shutters were up and the outhouses smelled. On the third day –back to school– get the new sneakers out, and, to my surprise, they fit perfectly on the dirt-brown, calloused feet.

The surge of city people to Silver Lake ended after 1947. That year, they didn't go home –they all stayed. The camps were winterized or torn down to build new houses. The Town Beach was opened (enclosed by a fence), and everyone had to have a tag to get in. I've still got mine. The summer people became townies.

The sizzling summers at Silver Lake came to an end when the flag burned on the beach on the last night of "Old Home Days."

Gerry O'Reilly

LIVING THE LIFE

Wit, wisdom and woe

Train trip to Silver Lake

by Lou Connelly

Maybe it's because my family didn't own a car when we were growing up in the '40s, but I've always held a soft spot in my heart for the train. For one thing, we never had to worry about the high cost or scarcity of gasoline because we knew we'd get to our summer destination.

The train, that marvelous old Boston & Maine standby, lugged by its noisy, grinding locomotive, took us where we wanted to go. That place was the country town of Tewksbury, just 15 miles north of Boston, but we anticipated that summer of fun like it was a trip to the White Mountains.

Ma and Pa and the five kids and a kitten up to its neck in a pillowcase, would start the trip from our home in Somerville. It generally meant a 10-minute walk to Somerville Junction, a long-forgotten whistle stop off Central Street.

The journey would end about 35 minutes later at Silver Lake, a stop in Wilmington. Then there would be a 15-minute jaunt through the woods to our small cottage in South Tewksbury.

The names of the stations along the way stand out as vividly as Jack Benny's litany of Anaheim to Cucamonga. Somerville Junction . . . Medford Hillside . . . West Medford . . . Wedgemere . . . Winchester . . . Cross Street . . . Woburn . . . Central Square . . . North Woburn . . . Wilmington . . . and finally Silver Lake.

There were times when we missed a train and had to take a later one that didn't stop at Silver Lake. We had to get off at Wilmington and wait for the Lowell bus out of Everett Station that dropped us at the Wilmington-Tewksbury line. Sometimes we took the Arlington Center bus from Bartlett and Medford Streets in Somerville and made a breakneck dash down Harvard Avenue to catch the B & M at West Medford station.

If we arrived after dark, it meant groping around to light an oil lamp since the cottage didn't have electricity. If you think we're all hooked on television today, forget it. We didn't even have a portable radio.

But the rides on the train to and from provided some of the fondest memories. Getting there might not have been half the fun, but it sure was an experience. We still recall the day the cat was scared by the approaching locomotive at Somerville Junction and fled from my older brother's grasp, never to be seen again.

In those days, Tewksbury had a population of about 2500 (today the town bulges with close to 25,000). The cottage nestled beneath towering pine trees, and somehow it escaped unscathed when the 1938 hurricane toppled the big pines like playing cards.

The summer population came from such communities as Charlestown, Somerville, Cambridge and Chelsea. The chief attraction was the quiet country and its closeness to Boston and that wonderful mudhole called Silver Lake.

You could tell us about Lake Sunapee or Lake Winnepesaukee or the beaches of Cape Cod, but we didn't care. Our Silver Lake proved exciting enough for us. Few of the vacationing families lived close to the lake, but they never minded the walk through the woods.

We could take our bath in the lake. We accepted the challenge of swimming from Skylark Beach to Bloodsucker Beach and loved the summer carnivals. The day the icehouse burned to the ground was the highlight of the summer of 1944.

"Well, we're here," my mother would sigh as she seated herself on our screened porch, the ultimate luxury of the little camp. "They must have thought we were a bunch of gypsies. I wonder what happened to the cat."

Often, there'd be a scramble to see who would sleep on the couch of that porch. I usually lost because I was the youngest. But when I occasionally won, I loved snuggling under the covers and listening to the frogs croak from the swamp in the distance. There'd be a train whistle and you could hear the 10:31 chug into the Silver Lake station.

"Right on time," my father would say as he pulled his watch from his vest pocket.

No longer does the train stop at Silver Lake, where as a teenager I once kissed a girlfriend goodbye and boarded the train to Somerville. Now you can buzz up to the place via Route 93 in 20 minutes. Old Route 38 is dotted with shopping centers, fast food chains and used car lots.

That's why when I read about gasoline shortages and folks worrying about getting to their summer vacations, I get a little nostalgic about the days gone by. Things really were much simpler then. ●

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Winning Float of the Old Home Days Parade

Front: Marjorie Johnson; Anna Grant; Bea Wetherbee; Paula Newhouse
Rear: Barbara Moore; Joan Preston, Queen of the Parade; and Dottie Froton

Jim Cain

1946

Rocco's

Adele Passmore **1940**

Boston's North End Came to Wilmington in 1940

Rocco DePasquale, Sr., and his family spent their summers on Kelly's Hill during 1934 to 1937 because Josephine Depasquale, his wife, suffered from tuberculosis. Rocco Sr. purchased some land on Main Street to build a house because the pine trees would be good for his wife's illness. They had a young son, Rocco Jr., who was born May 4, 1933. Unfortunately, Mrs. DePasquale died on December 26, 1937 before the house could be finished.

Rocco Sr. was left with a young son and a home partially built. His friends and family did not want young Rocco to be raised without a mother, so Rocco Sr. married Angela M. DePasquale on August 29, 1938, with the intention of starting a new life in Wilmington. Remembering the smells of the North End and the fine food there, Rocco built a restaurant and bakery. The property was a prime location with the Rainbow across the street, the Black Kat next door, and Thompson's Grove up the street, with Silver Lake nearby.

With plenty of sand, stone, and water coming from the foundation hole, Rocco Sr. decided to build a stone building. He and Armando DeCarolis worked hard–day and night–to finish the building. Across the street in the Rainbow, Peter Neilson, another well-known stone mason, told Rocco that the building would not last (Rocco Jr. laughs today, as he tries to bore through the 16-inch stone walls to improve the restaurant.)

Rocco Sr. built an apartment over the restaurant where his family lived, and he opened Rocco's Restaurant on July 4, 1940. Rocco Jr. took over in 1963, and today Rocco's is run by Rocco Jr.'s two sons, Rocco (Chuck) and Matt DePasquale.

Rocco Jr.

Adele Passmore

"The Rainbow"

(now C&J Lawnmower)

The Rainbow was a local family restaurant that was owned and operated by Mike Scelzo. Shown in the picture are Mike Scelzo, Ralph Scelzo, and Joe Scelzo. The Rainbow collapsed in 1948 when a severe storm covered the roof with deep snow followed by rain. The new building housed a shoe store and Shamrock Liquors.

Collapsed Rainbow

Joyce Dalton **1948**

Silver Lake, Mildred Rogers School across the lake

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

Mildred Rogers School

Ann Humphrey Berghaus **1981**

Silver Lake - from Lake Street side - portable Lake School on the left;

Jim Durkee Bloodsucker Beach across the lake: center. 1953

Saint Dorothy's Church

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

AAA Tire Company

Stanley's Gas, Main Street, Silver Lake

Roy Ferguson

1955

The "Pavilion" at Thompson's Grove, the center of great summer activity

Wilmington Historic Commission
Babcock Collection

Shamrock Liquors is the first building on the right,
then Silver Lake Drug; Riley's Gas Station is on the left.

Roy Ferguson

1955

Main Street, Route 38,
looking north towards Tewksbury.
The corner of Grove Ave. was a
bustling scene of activity, with
Shamrock Liquors, Silver Lake Drug,
Silver Lake Hardware, Tom
McQuaid's Market, the barber shop,
and the busiest of all, Tattersall's.
Tat's was ice cream, ice cream, ice
cream, newspaper, milk, bread, candy,
and friendship. The corner was the
gate to the town's only
natural resource, Silver Lake.

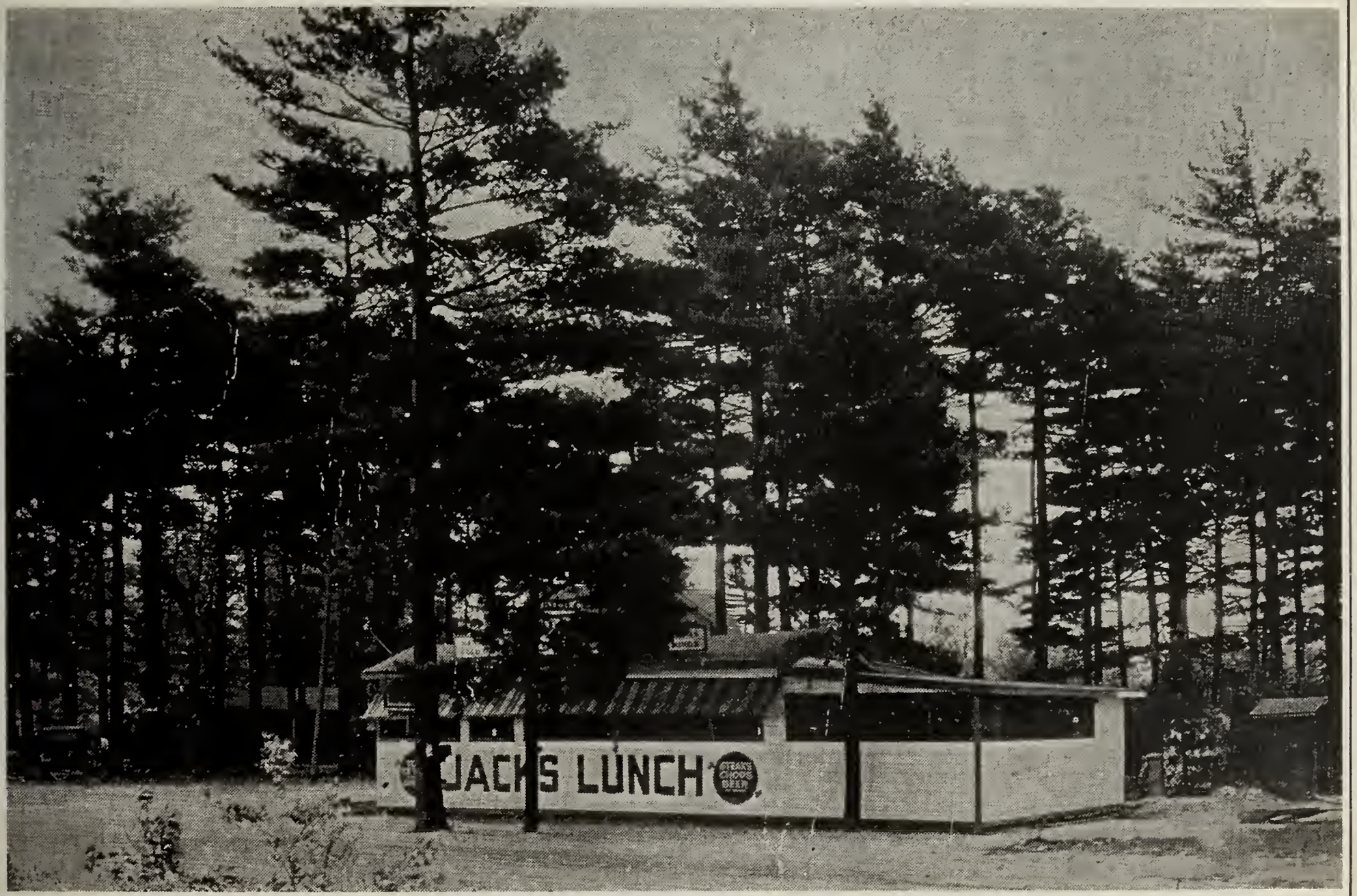
Tattersall's Paper Store

Roy Ferguson

1955

Tat's was built in 1924 by Bill and Lil Tattersall, and they only operated it during the summer months. Al "Jake" Riley, who had an ice delivery service in the summer, ran the store in the winter. Jake moved the gas pump over in 1940 and opened his gas station. Margaret and Hap Hourihan ran the store from 1945 until 1985. It is now Tootsie's Kitchen.

Bill Tattersall - about 1927



Joyce Dalton

Jack's Lunch –on Grove Avenue at the corner of Wild Avenue

1930s

First Grade Babies,

Second Grade Bums,

Third Grade Angels,

Fourth Grade Sugar Plums

Silver Lake School - 1937

Front Row: George Atkins, _____Leonard, William Chambers, _____,_____,Caroline Smalley,_____,_____,_____,
Joe Gilligan, Gerard Forrest
Back Row: _____, Fred Reynolds, Ernie White, Tommy Thorton, Catherine Duggan, Nancy Noble, Theresa Mahan, teacher: Miss Towle

Joe Gilligan

Silver Lake School - 1936

Front Row: _____, _____, Louis Burris, _____, Gerard Forrest, Joe Gilligan, Mildred Erickson, _____, _____, Ernie White, Jeff O'Brien, Jimmy Field, _____, Georgie Atkins, Harold Hillson

2nd Row: _____, _____, _____Leonard, William Chambers, Roland Peterson, Charles Sullivan, _____, _____, Marvin Russell, Brennan, _____, _____, _____

3rd Row: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____Sullivan, John Barry, Fred Reynolds, _____, Fred Reynolds, Theresa Mahan, Caroline Smalley, _____,_____, Mickey Kelly, _____,Catherine Duggan,_____

At Back: teacher: _____,Miss Towle, Francis Poitrast

Joe Gilligan

Silver Lake School - 1937

Front Row: Phyllis O'Brien, Martha Dahlin, _____, Virginia Burris, Marie Baldwin, Jeanne Melzar, Shirley Peterson, Roland Peterson, Charlsie Sullivan, _____, Harold Hillson, Jim Field

2nd Row: Sis Brennan, Ernie Brown, Francis Poitrast, Dick Goss, Joe Noonan, Hank Stewart, John Myers, George White, Frank Turner

3rd Row: Peter Pistoulas, Dick Neilson, Bob Barry, Frank Reynolds, Freddie O'Reilly, Neil Joyce, Harvey Dec, George Fosket

4th Row: Harold Carta, Phil Van Steenburg, Bob Mahan, Eddie Forrest, Carl Edwinson, Theresa Hutchinson, Rose Kelly, Mary Fleming

Gerry O'Reilly

Silver Lake School - 1936

First Row: John Myers, Frank Turner, George White, _____, Francis Poitrast, _____, Les Fosket, _____, George Fosket, Hank Stewart, George Hillson, Neil Joyce

2nd Row: Patsey Dooley, Betty Gilligan, Gerry Sullivan, Rita Joyce, Rose Kelly, Phyllis O'Brien, Virginia Burris, Martha Dahlin, Jean Melzar, Marie Baldwin, Shirley Peterson, Jimmy O'Brien

3rd Row: Mary Fleming, Maxine Thompson, Marjorie Dahlin, Gert Donovan, Jean Russell, Harold Carta, Peter Pistoulas, Eddie Forrest, Freddie O'Reilly, Phil Van Steenburg, _____, Bob Mahan, Hank Duggan

At Back: Dick Neilson, John White

Gerry O'Reilly

Silver Lake School - 1934

Front Row: Neil Joyce, Phil Van Steenburg, Virginia Burris, Martha Dahlin, Elenor Smith, John Myers, Frank Turner, Hank Stewart, _____, Jimmy Field, Charlsie Sullivan, _____, _____, George White,_____,_____
2nd Row: Patsey Dooley, Marjorie Dahlin, Betty Gilligan, _____, Theresa Hutchinson, Gert Donovan, Jean Russell, Rita Joyce, Gerry Sullivan, _____, Jimmy O'Brien, _____, _____Doherty, _____, Phyllis O'Brien
3rd Row: Joe Noonan, Carl Edwinson, _____, _____, Freddie O'Reilly, _____, Dick Neilson, Frank Reynolds, George Hillson, Bob Barry, George Fosket, Vincent Carey, Shirley Peterson, Marie Baldwin, Peter Pistoulas, _____
At Back: Elmer Southmayde

Gerry O'Reilly

P6628 A View from Silver Lake, Wilmington, Mass.

Adele Passmore / Edith Lyford 1920

P6629 Thru the Pines, Silver Lake, Wilmington, Mass.

P6631 The Lake Street Shore Line, Wilmington, Mass.

P6620 Lake Street, Wilmington, Mass.

P6619 Reflections, Silver Lake, Wilmington, Mass.

P6617 In the Cove, Wilmington, Mass.

West Schoolhouse (1875)
With fond memories of happy days spent in this little school, many residents turned out to celebrate this building being listed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 8, 1990.

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

Water Stand Pipe, Kelly's Hill

Jim Durkee **1953**

Billerica–Wilmington Airport on Hopkins Street
(building on the left is the Sky Port Lounge – a Billerica nightspot)

Jim Durkee **1953**

P6627 The Old Mill Stream, Wilmington, Mass.

Middlesex Canal at Lake Street

Adele Passmore / Edith Lyford **1920**

The Middlesex Canal Aqueduct over the Shawsheen River on Shawsheen Avenue at the Billerica town line.

Gerry O'Reilly **1980**

Bill Dayton — The Middlesex Canal Aqueduct support column — 1900